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Abstract

In-depth exploration of Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, his retelling of the Psyche and Cupid myth from the viewpoint of one of Psyche's sisters, Orual. Taking as her key the god's admonition to Orual after she forces her sister to disobey him, "You also shall be Psyche," Hood examines Orual's transformations of herself and her society and the nature and meaning of the tasks she symbolically shares with her sister. An appendix details similarities and differences between the classical Latin sources and Lewis's version.

Additional Keywords

Apuleius, Lucius. "Cupid and Psyche"—Relation to *Till We Have Faces*; Apuleius, Lucius. "Cupid and Psyche."; Cupid and Psyche (myth)—Relation to *Till We Have Faces*; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Orual; Lewis, C.S.—Sources; Lewis, C.S. *Till We Have Faces*



HEROIC ORUAL AND THE TASKS OF PSYCHE

GWENYTH HOOD

C.S. LEWIS'S LAST NOVEL, *TILL WE HAVE FACES: A CORYMB RETOLD*, concerns transformations. After all, it deals with the myth of Psyche. In Greek, *Psyche* means not only *soul* but also *butterfly*.¹ This brings to mind the metamorphosis of a crawling caterpillar into a winged butterfly, analogous to the protagonist's transformation from mortal to goddess. In Lewis's retelling, not only does a mortal human become an immortal goddess,² but also, an ugly soul turns beautiful, a coarse, barbaric populace grows into a gracious civilization, and

¹ This definition is found, for example, in *The Story of Cupid and Psyche as Related by Apuleius*, by Louis Purser, p. 76.

² No doubt Lewis, as a Christian, used the word "god" or "goddess" in this context with some trepidation, but nevertheless, he sometimes made bold use of such words, since the concept of humanity transformed into divinity has its place in the Christian tradition. He did not, of course, mean what ancient pagans would have meant by such words, but he shared with his readers the knowledge that new insights must sometimes be expressed in older terms which will then change their meanings. Famously, in a sermon presented, as Walter Hooper states in his introduction to the Revised Edition of *The Weight of Glory*, "at Solemn Evensong in the twelfth-century Oxford University Church of St. Mary the Virgin on 8 June 1941 to one of the largest congregations ever assembled there in modern times" (17), he reminded his hearers that they "live[d] in a society of possible gods and goddesses" (45). From this phrase, Kathryn Lindskoog took the title of Chapter 4 of her early book, *The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land* (85-122). Elsewhere in his apologetics, Lewis likens the process by which human beings take on new life in Christ to the process of becoming "gods" (*Mere Christianity* 186; Ch.11 ["The New Men"]). In *The Great Divorce*, his incarnation of George MacDonald, acting as spiritual guide Lewis's *persona* in that work, declares, "The Lord said we were gods" (125; Ch.13). Apparently George MacDonald alludes here to the gospel of John 10:34, where Christ, about to be stoned by a crowd which accuses him of claiming divine attributes, responds not by elucidating his operations in the world as the Second Person of the Trinity but instead quotes scripture (apparently Psalm 82.6, as helpful marginalia in various editions in the Bible will specify) in which God informs his human hearers that they are "gods." To be sure, the angry crowd was not appeased, and Jesus evaded their murderous intent in a manner not described in context.

cruel divinities with a thirst for human blood become loving guardians of the human race. Lewis's protagonist and narrator, Orual, who only becomes "Psyche" at the end, both enacts and observes these transformations, which, to be sure, can only be completed by the divine power with whom she seems to be at odds until the end.

Orual herself is a heroic character who strives to change for the better the ugly and undesirable situation around her. Before the end, she perceives that no lasting happiness will reach her until her own ugly and undesirable nature is transformed. Her narrative, in two parts (the first much longer than the second), is itself an instrument both of self-illumination, as she states (253; Part II, Ch.1) and of transformation. But Orual also learns, with increasing clarity, that while she can desire and strive toward transformation, she cannot accomplish it herself. At about the same time, she realizes that "divine Surgeons" (266; Part II, Ch.1) are at work on her. She does not, at first, trust that their intervention is therapeutic, for she is entangled in a struggle with them, in fact a legal battle. The stated purpose of her entire composition was to "accuse the gods" (3; Ch.1) and prove them guilty of mistreating her and giving her a wretched life.

The legal battle focuses on the incident where Orual was caught red-handed defying a god, that is, the divine bridegroom of her youngest sister, Istra (Psyche in the Greek). Like the unnamed elder sisters in Apuleius's original (see the Appendix for comparisons between the stories), she had instigated the young bride to violate her unseen husband's prohibition of light in their chamber. As a result of her disobedience, the god manifests himself and declares to Orual that young Istra-Psyche "goes into exile," and that Orual "shall know [herself] and [her] work" and "also shall be Psyche," which Orual takes to mean that she will share her sister's sufferings (173-174; Ch.15). In her accusation against the gods, Orual claims (to paraphrase the more objective points of her summation in Part I) that the punishment was unfairly retroactive, since, due to the capricious and secretive ways of the gods, she could not have understood that her antagonist was divine until after the offense (248-250; Ch.21). If only the god had chosen to reveal himself before, neither she nor her sister need have been punished.

Critics³ have noted that Orual, in accusing the divine powers which rule the universe, resembles the Biblical Job. Like Job, she also retracts her accusation in the end. Indeed, her retractions go further than Job's, since while the latter acknowledges that he erred in accusing God of wrongdoing in permitting his faithful servant to endure loss and extreme hardship (Ch.42), he never takes back his original assertion that he, personally, had done no wrong to bring this all upon himself. On this point, God vindicates him and finds fault with his three

³ For example, Joe R. Christopher, in "Archetypal Patterns" 201-202, and Doris T. Myers (*Bareface* 14; Ch.1).

friends, or “miserable comforters” as Job once calls them (16:2), who had kept insisting that his sufferings were in themselves proof of his guilt, and that he should admit it (Ch.3-31). At divine direction, Job intercedes to gain pardon for them (42:7-9). Then his own fortunes are restored.⁴

Unlike Job, Orual admits in Part II that her crucial action in Part I was wrong, although she did not understand it clearly at the time. Indeed, Part II is written explicitly to retract the central errors of Part I, and to show how flawed and incomplete her insights had been. Not surprisingly, many critics, including myself,⁵ follow her lead in our analysis, dissecting her erroneous conduct with even greater subtlety than she does herself, because we suppose that was Lewis’s point; he meant to prove Orual’s passionate and articulate accusations false and thus, like Milton, “justify the ways of God to men” (*Paradise Lost* 1:26).⁶ However, such justification need not always come completely at the expense of the protagonist, and we scholars risk ignoring another side of Lewis’s aesthetic intent when we look for perverse wrong-headedness in everything that Orual says, presuming that every character from whom she receives instruction is her moral superior.⁷

⁴ There are, of course, striking contrasts between Orual’s situation and Job’s. Orual’s sufferings are of a much more subjective, interior kind than those of Job, who had lost his children, his property, and then his health.

⁵ For example, in “Husbands and Gods as Shadowbrutes,” published more than a decade ago in *Mythlore*, I enlarge upon Orual’s self-delusions on page 42. On the next page, I do admit that Orual’s actions as Queen reveal to her culture “a nobler concept” of “the divine.”

⁶ See especially Clyde Kilby, in his “*Till We Have Faces: An Interpretation*,” where he shows how Orual, in a pagan context, had experienced the “witness” (172) of God’s power, goodness and love early in the book, although she ignored and rejected it. Thus, in Lewis’s fictional reconstruction of the pagan past, the God of the Bible did not actually neglect the gentiles, as he is often accused of doing. The reasons why Orual finds it so difficult to accept this “witness” when her younger sister finds it so easy are presumably as mysterious as human personalities and human choices everywhere.

⁷ No doubt I am myself the critic most in need of this admonition. However, better scholars than I also apparently yield to this temptation sometimes, at least temporarily. For example, Peter Schakel, in Chapter 2 of his *Reason and Imagination*, places Orual herself among the “brutes” whom, as Orual says, her beautiful young sister had “the strangest and [...] unchanciest” tendency to love (14). Though witty and memorable, this jibe glosses over the fact that Orual and her youngest sister share a very special bond, as Psyche herself acknowledges with stinging words in Chapter 14, saying that she had “loved, honoured, trusted, and (while it was fit) obeyed” Orual (166; Ch.14). Istra-Psyche’s deep love for her sister makes Orual’s betrayal worse but also destroys the analogy between Orual and a stray “brute.” Attacking Orual from another angle, Doris T. Myers, in her very learned and subtle *Bareface: A Guide to C.S. Lewis’s Last Novel*, calls Orual “an unreliable narrator” (3) because (for starters), she places too much blame on her second sister Redival for her troubles, including the catastrophic decision to sacrifice Istra-Psyche. Myers shows (from

For though Orual is hardly admirable in everything she does, she often behaves with considerable virtue, courage, and wisdom. Moreover, as a protagonist, she is more remarkable for the insight she gains into her faults than for the faults themselves. In the fictional situation Lewis creates, the resolution of Orual's problems requires that she understand her own involvement in what the Christian tradition describes as "original sin," a condition which inevitably causes error, inexactness, and corruption to enter all human actions and perceptions.⁸ Since neither of the two cultures from which Orual draws her education supplies her with this doctrine—or even with psychoanalytical theories which might cover the same ground—she must learn it the hard way and then spell out some of its consequences with much detail which would be unnecessary if the understanding were already common background between her and her imagined audience. Her struggles, her energetic though sometimes misdirected ratiocinations, her sifting of intuitions, and her courageous, even rash defiance toward the mysterious divine powers, are instrumental to her enlightenment, and thus the happy outcome.

Orual possesses that mixture of virtue and flaws which Aristotle in his *Poetics* attributes to the tragic hero. Of the models which she herself knew, she

Orual's own narrative, since there is no other evidence) that Redival's contribution to Glome's troubles and Psyche's downfall is relatively minor. But to show that Orual blames Redival disproportionately for them, she depends on a very broad reading of the opening words in Part I, Chapter 3: "It was Redival who ended the good time" (25). Myers evidently takes this as a reference to Psyche's sacrificial execution; but most probably it relates strictly to the first three paragraphs of that chapter, which explain how, after King Trom catches Redival in a secret assignation with a young guard, Tarin, he commands the Fox and Orual "never to let her [Redival] out of [their] sight" (25). Redival's reluctant and scornful presence at all their meetings spoils the delightful freedom and intimacy which Orual and Istra had enjoyed with their tutor. As narrators go, Orual is, even in Part I, quite reliable. To be sure, her viewpoint is distorted if judged against the standards of perfect wisdom and omniscience, but she has a good mind and is truly attempting to remember and understand her past. When the evidence compels her to change her opinion, she does so—eventually. How many narrators can be trusted that far?

⁸ Lewis discusses original sin in many contexts; see for example chapter 4 of his *Problem of Pain* ("Human Wickedness" 55-68). In *Till We Have Faces*, Part II, Ch.4, the Fox conveys some idea of original sin and the need for redemption with the words, "All, even Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her" (301). The success of his explanation depends on the reader's understanding of the goddess Ungit at this point in the story, as the sad, unfulfilled, ugly side of human nature which Orual (and her people) have projected onto the gods. Earlier in the book, Istra-Psyche may have been suggesting similar ideas when she states that, after first glimpsing the god of the West-wind, she was "ashamed of being a mortal," because, as she said, "we [mortals], beside the gods, are like lepers beside us" (111; Ch.10). However, such a contrast between mortals and gods could have other explanations.

perhaps bears the closest resemblance to Oedipus, whose name she and her Greek tutor the Fox mention more than once.⁹ However, divine benevolence in Lewis's story ensures that her fate is ultimately comic in Dante's sense, or *eucatastrophic* in Tolkien's.¹⁰

⁹ For example, in Chapter 13, the Fox says "It need[ed] no Oedipus" (144) to explain why Istra-Psyche suffers delusions after what she has gone through. Here he refers to Oedipus's gift for solving riddles, used most notably against the Sphinx. Orual uses the same phrase later (267; Part II, Ch.1). In Chapter 13, Orual refers to another phase of the Oedipus myth when she states that she and her sister must flee and "wander like Oedipus" (147). Here she refers to the events dramatized in *Oedipus at Colonus*, where the blinded Oedipus travels from place to place, guided by his daughter Antigone. The pattern of Oedipus's life suggests that he has been manipulated by the gods, for their own reasons, into the crime of killing his father and marrying his mother, and when he learns this truth, he blinds himself, overwhelmed at the horrible and bewildering guilt. But he does not forget that he committed these crimes unknowingly. In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, he asserts his innocence as an individual (lines 960-980), and in the end he is mysteriously blessed by the gods, with his tomb also conferring a blessing on the city which receives him (1510-1535). In some ways Oedipus is a mirror image of Orual. He blinds himself when he learns what he has done, to hinder his direct observation of the world in which he finds himself an offender without his intent; she veils herself to prevent her face from being seen when she concludes that both her appearance and her actions are and will be unacceptable to all whom she knows. A more detailed comparison between Orual and Oedipus might yield further insights, but is clearly beyond the scope of this essay.

¹⁰ In contrasting comedy with tragedy (in drama) Aristotle indicated that comedy dealt with characters "worse [...] than actual life" (49; II), while tragedy deals with "nobler actions" (50; IV). Tragic characters must be grand but not perfect, neither too wicked nor too virtuous for the fates which overtake them. After all, the audience would cheer the downfall of an "utter villian," not a tragic reaction, and would be simply be "shock[ed]" by the destruction of "a virtuous man" (not tragic either). Therefore, the best tragic characters are virtuous enough to attract admiration and empathy, but erring enough for the audience to fear and expect disaster to befall them (55; XIII). Dante shows acquaintance with a similar aesthetic when he describes his great epic work as a "comedy," because comedies begin with suffering but end in happiness. He also acknowledged that comedies are "lax and humble" while tragedies were "exalted and sublime," but he associates the "lowness" of comedy, not with moral purpose or insight, but with the humble vernacular, the language of the people, which he has preferred to the scholarly Latin in the writing of his masterpiece (122). Tolkien, not accepting the idea that happy endings were necessarily "lower" than tragic ones, used the word *eucatastrophe* to describe fairy tale endings where catastrophes are followed by a sudden overthrow which produces "Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (81). Thus he combines the grandeur of tragedy with the positive outcome of the comedy, precisely because divine intervention has occurred. Aristotle, on the other hand, thought that the direct involvement of gods within plots was a defect, the *deus ex machina* (56-57; XV). Dorothy L. Sayers's remarks about how Christian theology might be expected to change Christian aesthetics ("Toward a Christian Aesthetic") may cast further light on the issues involved.

Hence, more than the story of Oedipus, Orual's life parallels the wrestling of Jacob with God in *Genesis* 32, a struggle which transforms a fugitive trickster and opportunist, alienated from brother and father-in-law, into the newly named *Israel*, father of the Chosen Nation. One supposes that conflict between an all-powerful god and a mere mortal (no matter how stubborn or gifted) would end very swiftly unless the god's object were something more subtle than the defeat and destruction of its opponent; rather the outcome must somehow benefit both the contestants, a mutual victory.¹¹ At any rate, this proves to be the case in Lewis's story, where Orual is transformed from a bitter princess cheated by life into a benevolent queen, loved by her people.

Orual's chief vice is one which Lewis treated in several works: the tendency, as he explains to Clyde Kilby, to idolize "natural affection" and to become "tyrannically possessive" towards chosen love-objects. However, Lewis also says, "Orual is (not a symbol) but an instance" (qtd. in Green 266) of this vice. That is, even as she yields to her worse impulses, she shows potential to do better. Thus, her crime is not simply inevitable but the result of a choice, making her a fully realized character.

Of course, for her chief vice to take hold, Orual must develop deep and real affections in the first place. These are directed toward youngest sister, Istra-Psyche, whom she had cared for since her infancy. It is not obvious, in the early chapters, that Orual's love for the child was baneful, or that she insistently imposed her own views, tastes, and attitudes upon the girl. For example, when Orual reports that the infant Psyche had "the strangest and, I thought, unchanciest love for all manner of brutes," it is clear that while she was sometimes uneasy the child's enthusiasms, she was also charmed by them. As she explained, "When [Istra] picked up a toad [...] the toad became beautiful" (22; Ch.2). She was willing, at that time, to accept the child on her own rather unusual terms.

Toads are one thing, but divinities, in Part I of Orual's narrative, are more sinister. The crisis in the sisters' lives comes during their adolescence when the Old Priest, supported by the populace of Glome, demands of Orual's father,

¹¹ The nineteenth century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in "Carrión Comfort," which alludes to the Jacob's wrestling match, makes this point vividly:

Cheer whom though? The hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fáot tród
 Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
 Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God. (lines 12-14).

Other Biblical passages suggest that while the Biblical God values sincere obedience (1 Samuel 15:22), initial defiance is quickly forgiven in those who afterwards do the divine will (Matthew 21:28-31), and open rebellion may be preferred to indifference or timid evasions (Revelations 3:16).

King Trom, that Istra-Psyche be given up through a horrifying archaic form of sacrifice to appease the goddess Ungit and her mysterious son, the Brute, a shadowy being cryptically identified with the god of the Grey Mountain where the offering must be bound and abandoned (45-56; Ch.5). The doomed Istra-Psyche once calls him the "holy Shadowbrute" (70; Ch.7).

Orual will perceive this event differently in the two parts of the narrative, but we must note that even the first part is not told by the youthful Orual. Only years later does the aged queen Orual, whose body is now "lean carrion" (3; Ch.1) resolve to accuse the gods with a written account. Until then, she has concealed key parts of the story from all whom she knew. Besides, she claims to be reviving, in her narrative, an "Orual" whom she had emotionally "kill[ed]" (224; Ch.19), one now alien to her. Within the narrative, the voice of the aged queen frequently enters when Orual discusses her father, King Trom, whose relationship with his children was cold and distant. Early on, she writes that she "came nearer to loving him than I had been yet" (29; Ch.3) when he puts on armor to defeat a rebellion. In saying this, perhaps she mocks her youthful susceptibility to men in armor, or perhaps she demonstrates that, even as an old woman, she is bound to her father not only by blood but by their common experience as warriors and rulers. Somewhat later in the story, when people grow rebellious during plague and famine (preliminary to their demand for Istra-Psyche's sacrifice) Orual criticizes her father's decision to order archers to shoot just one scoffer in a raging crowd at the palace gates; under such circumstances, she says, a king should "have killed either none of them, or nearly all" (36; Ch.4). She now recognizes the folly of provoking people severely and then leaving them free to make more trouble, but the reactions of the youthful Orual to this event remain unclear. Was she disturbed by the bloodshed, or indifferent? The question is not central to the story.

Yet Orual is at her most vivid in writing of her special love for her youngest half-sister, Psyche, and the family-like intimacy the two shared with their Greek tutor, whom they call the Fox and "Grandfather." But genuine as Orual's love for Istra-Psyche may be, part of its intensity stems from what Orual regards as the great misfortune of her life: she is physically ugly.¹² From her earliest childhood, she has suffered mortification because of this. As Chapter 1 begins, she recounts that servants commented on the beautiful golden hair of her second sister Redival, not her own, when both heads were "shorn" in mourning for their dead mother (5). A few pages later, her father cruelly jokes that the sight of his elder daughter, unveiled, at his wedding with his second queen, would

¹² This motif is missing from the ancient tale, first recorded by Lucius Apuleius in the second century A.D., where both Psyche's elder sisters were beautiful. See Appendix, Table 2.

terrify her new stepmother (11). This is more than an injury to Orual's vanity; it shows that her father fears she will be unable to fulfill the only role which her culture generally allows for women: to be a wife and mother. King Trom makes this even clearer when he especially commends his elder daughter to his newly acquired slave, the Fox, as a pupil: "See if you can make her wise; it's about all she'll ever be good for" (7; Ch.1). In Part II, Orual will understand that her physical ugliness is an analogy to the spiritual ugliness (282; Ch.3) of original sin. However, in neither the first nor the second part of the narrative does she equate ugliness of appearance with ugliness of character, even though her father seems to think both equally bad (if inconvenient to him). That Orual does not is probably due to the Stoic teachings of the Fox, who can be trusted to remember such distinctions and who not only appreciates her fine mind but also comes to love her as a daughter. His perception that she is physically unattractive only comes out in his "tender[ness]" as he croons Sappho's poem for her, "The moon's gone down, but/ Alone I lie," and she senses that "he pitied me for something" (9).

Although Orual responds to the Fox's love and kindness, this is not enough to inspire any delicious anticipation about life as a wife and mother in her community. But while the Fox is her tutor, she finds herself acting as foster mother to her youngest sister, a delightfully beautiful child who reciprocates the affection of both. Receptive to Greek teachings, and obedient to her sister's authority, Istra-Psyche seems to be, as the Fox says, (with loving exaggeration) "Virtue herself [...] [in] a human form" (26; Ch.3). The child is taught to call her eldest sister *Maia*, a Greek word which can mean "mother."¹³ In this small community, and only in this one, Orual can believe her ugliness unimportant. She finds such delight in this life that she wishes it to continue forever.

Of course it does not last. Suddenly, Orual's full sister, Redival, having disgraced herself by attempting a love-affair with a young noble (who is, in consequence, castrated and sold as a eunuch), is imposed on Orual and the Fox as a companion and prisoner by King Trom (25; Ch.3). Redival detests Greek learning and demands bribes to keep her from tale-bearing when she learns that local peasants are making obeisance to young Istra-Psyche as a goddess (27; Ch.3). Gifts fail, however, to win Redival's discretion (63; Ch.6), and in any case, a plague brings danger nearer when the Fox falls ill. When Psyche insists on tending him, and he subsequently recovers, palace gossip reports that "the beautiful princess could cure the fever by her touch" (30; Ch.3). Soon a mob

¹³ See Myers, *Bareface* 44. I am informed by Dr. Charles Lloyd, professor of Classics, that the word *μαία*, as used by a variety of ancient Greek authors, can mean a mother (Aeschylus), or a nurse (Euripides) or a midwife (Plato); it was also, in the *Odyssey*, a friendly title for women in "of perhaps lower status [...] 'good mother' or 'dame.'"

comes to the door demanding that "the princess with her healing hands" (31; Ch.3) be sent out to attend them. Lacking the power to fight off so many, King Trom does their bidding, and his youngest daughter is now openly hailed as goddess. Later, to be sure, she is called "the Accursed" and accused of causing the plague (37-41; Ch.4). Such things could not be kept secret from the politically jealous Old Priest of the Goddess Ungit ("a very normal fertility mother-goddess" as Lewis describes her in a letter to Clyde Kilby [qtd. in Green 266]). Having recovered from his own bout with the plague, the Old Priest arrives with his demand for the "Great Offering," the victim who must be brought to the Holy Tree on the Grey Mountain and abandoned there, bound, for the Shadowbrute to devour or take as a bride (these actions, as the priest says, mean the same thing). This terrifying sacrifice, only demanded in times of crisis, was last performed during the reign of Trom's grandmother (47; Ch.5). In vain, the Fox brings his Greek wisdom to bear against Glomian religious authorities. Though he points out, accurately, that the Old Priest's explanations are incoherent and apparently self-contradictory, the Priest responds with an *ad hominem* attack, reminding his listeners that the Fox is a slave whose very survival, as a war captive, proves him a coward. Moreover, his premise that Glomian divinities need conform to Greek understanding is simply mistaken. Certainly, the Fox rightly points out that Ungit's chosen victim must be both a criminal who has insulted the goddess (45-46; Ch.5) and the most excellent human being in the land (49; Ch.5). But if that is hard for Greeks to understand, so much the worse for the Greeks. The peoples' duty is to satisfy the goddess, not to criticize her logic, Greek fashion (50; Ch.5). If the description seems ambiguous, "[H]oly lots"(54-55; Ch.5) have identified the victim (Istra-Psyche), thus ending further need for discussion. When Orual pleads with her father to try harder to spare her youngest sister, he beats her for her fervor. When she offers to be sacrificed in her sister's place, he drags her to a mirror and tells her that she is too ugly for the gods (62; Ch.6).

Orual falls ill, and meanwhile, the House of Ungit has its way with Psyche, who is, in Chapter 8, bound, carried off and abandoned just as the Old Priest prescribed. When Orual recovers her health, she resolves that, having "missed being Iphigenia"¹⁴ she can perform the part of Antigone by journeying as far as the Grey Mountain to find and bury her sister's remains (86; Ch.8).

Thus far, Orual's main attitudes and actions must command the reader's sympathy and admiration. Her lesser actions and attitudes undercut this

¹⁴ Iphigenia was sacrificed by her father Agamemnon to please the gods and get the wind his fleet needed to sail to Troy. The Fox alluded to this story in his conversation with King Trom (58; Ch.6) apparently because this sacrifice, among other things, provoked Agamemnon's murder by his queen Clytemnestra, as told in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus.

to some degree. For example, Orual is furiously angry with Redival for her part in attracting the Old Priest's attention to Istra, and when Redival expresses anxiety at the impending sacrifice (partly for the young victim but mostly for herself), Orual threatens to execute her painfully if she ever becomes Queen of Glome (63; Ch.6). Wrathfulness may be a family trait, since Orual recounts that even Psyche "had our father's hot blood, though her angers were all the sort that come from love" (30; Ch.3). In any event, when Orual actually finds herself likely to succeed her father as ruler, she retracts the threat (204; Ch.18), which she certainly does not carry out.

Any remorse Orual may feel for her dealings with Redival is reserved for Part II.¹⁵ But her quarrel with beloved Istra-Psyche, in Chapter 7 before her sacrificial death, causes her immediate sorrow and helps shape the ensuing events. Orual had gained the favor of visiting her doomed sister only with difficulty, and since she has learned no way to rescue her, she only wished to comfort her. But when she finds Istra-Psyche surprisingly calm, Orual, wrapped up in her own grief, rages against her and reproaches her for dwelling on the consoling idea that she is, in a sense, marrying a god, as the Old Priest had said (among other things).¹⁶ Istra-Psyche's self-control is fragile as she pleads, subtly, for her sister to cease tormenting her with the worst possible imaginings about her approaching ordeal. Orual's loss of temper is far from admirable, yet the intense situation gives her some excuse.

However, the consequences of the quarrel persist even after Istra-Psyche is sacrificed. In Chapter 8, Orual is, during her illness, haunted by dreams that Istra-Psyche has become a punishing enemy, and even a rival in love (81). Recovering, Orual recognizes that Psyche "had never willingly done me any wrong" (82), and attributes the dreams to delusions sent by the gods. Modern readers will perceive that they spring from Orual's subconscious (in Freudian terms), and that they suggest a deeper hostility toward her youngest sister than she has admitted. In the past, her envy of Psyche may have been neutralized by

¹⁵ In Part II, Orual recognizes that she might have owed more affection and kindness even to so flawed and offending sister as Redival, and that envy of Redival's prettiness may, in part, have obstructed her (254-256; Ch.1). She does not, however, change her assessment of Redival's character.

¹⁶ Istra-Psyche also points out that Orual's fierce calls for revenge fly in the face of the Fox's Stoic teachings, quoting as if from him in a passage somewhat reminiscent of the opening of Book II in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius: "Orual, [...] you make me think I have learned the Fox's lessons better than you. Have you forgotten what we are to say to ourselves every morning? 'Today I shall meet cruel men, cowards and liars, the envious and the drunken. They will be like that because they do not know what is good from what is bad. This is an evil which has fallen upon them not upon me. [...]' (68; Ch.7).

Istra's obedience and admiration for her big sister, but when Istra follows her own path, it shows its full strength.

However, in Chapter 9, when Orual resolves to "be Antigone," she seems to have resumed her positive and virtuous behavior,¹⁷ responding to the best ideals placed before her by her Greek tutor the Fox. In this, she follows the pattern of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*,¹⁸ as Lewis describes it in his letter to Clyde Kilby, "making the best of the Pagan religion she is brought up in and thus being guided (but always 'under the cloud', always in terms of her own imagination or that of her people) toward the true God" (qtd. in Green 266).¹⁹

This changes when Orual, in her melancholy quest, finds no scattered bones but rather a living, thriving, happy sister. At first, just as we might expect, she is overjoyed. But as the sisters converse, Orual realizes that the glorious palace Istra-Psyche describes as her dwelling is right before her and yet invisible to her. This startling discovery brings Chapter 10 to a halt. As Chapter 11 begins, Istra seems equally astonished that Orual cannot perceive her wonderful palace, or understand the nature of the rich refreshments she has received (119; Ch.11). After recovering from her shock, the younger sister suggests that her divine

¹⁷ Doris Myers in *Bareface* (52-53; Ch.9), states that Orual's decision, and the Fox's, to turn to "tragic poetry" leads them to "depression and self-pity" (52-53). Yet Orual was hardly free from depression and self-pity before she resolved to "be Antigone." To further illustrate her point, Myers mentions that in another of Lewis's fictional works, *Perelandra*, the diabolic surrogate Weston, the "Un-Man," tries to lead the as yet unfallen Tinidril into sin by inculcating in her the attitude of a "tragedy queen" (53). The parallel is interesting, but the moral possibilities for unfallen Tinidril are quite different from those of Orual, already subject to original sin, though she does not know the doctrine. Lewis knew that literature could be a means of corruption, but he also saw positive moral effects in it, as he explains, in *The Abolition of Man*. For people to learn virtuous conduct, he says, literature must be used to produce "emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments," tending toward good actions (24-25). Myers does point out that Orual, on her way to find Psyche, struggles against a tendency to rejoice in the beauty of nature around her, a reaction which she had not anticipated. But human attempts to rein in and change emotions are not necessarily wrong under all conditions. Young Istra-Psyche herself, the night before her sacrificial execution, endorses the Fox's teachings as being the best she knows, while acknowledging their limits. After first asserting that her Greek tutor "hasn't the whole truth," she immediately qualifies her insight: "Oh, he has much of it. It'd be dark as a dungeon within me but for his teaching" (70; Ch.7).

¹⁸ The phrase *anima naturaliter Christiana*, which is ultimately drawn from the theologian Tertullian (2nd and 3rd century AD), is translated "constitutionally Christian soul" by Philip Schaff (Volume 1, Ch.1). It was, in part, an attempt to come to grips with the phenomenon described in Romans 2:12-17, the "Gentiles who have not the law" but who "do by nature what the law requires" and are thus "a law to themselves."

¹⁹ Lewis here is describing Istra-Psyche, but we must remember that Orual, at the work's conclusion, is "also Psyche." Thus, she follows the same pattern, though differently.

bridegroom, whom she herself is not permitted to see, will eventually help Orual gain the necessary vision.

But Orual will not accept her sister's account of this unseen bridegroom and his benevolence. After consulting her two advisors, Bardia (the captain of the guard from Glome, who has befriended her, instructed her in fighting, and helped her find her way to the mountain), and the Fox, her Greek tutor, she concludes that the situation cannot go on. It is true that the two men have entirely different interpretations of the situation, but either way, Orual thinks, it is intolerable. For Istra-Psyche must either be living with the "Shadowbrute" of the Old Priest's story (Bardia's theory), or else with a human outlaw masquerading as a god (as the Fox suggests). Orual is certain that her sister would be better off dead than continuing with either mate, and she, Orual, would willingly die to save her from either. Or, if the sisters manage to escape, they can go wandering around the world as exiles, the Fox with them. (The Fox volunteers to join the putative exile but does not agree that Istra-Psyche would necessarily be better off dead than living with an outlaw [146; Ch.13]).

To bring Istra-Psyche into her plan, Orual designs a stratagem which is both manipulative and coercive. Naturally, she is haunted by doubt and remorse before and after carrying it out. She perceives that Psyche's current happiness (delusive or otherwise) will be ruined, whatever happens. However, she justifies her choice with philosophical and moral arguments: "I perceived now that there is a love deeper than theirs who seek only the happiness of their beloved. Would a father see his daughter happy as a whore? Would a woman see her lover happy as a coward?" (138; Ch.12). Curiously, these sentiments are echoed by Lewis in other works; for example, in *The Problem of Pain* he points out that modern ethics dangerously emphasize "kindness" at the expense of all other virtues and "cruelty" at the expense of all other faults (56; Ch.4), when in fact true kindness may demand apparent harshness in some contexts, just as Orual says. Parents, in particular, are expected to insist on virtuous behavior in children; if they do not, their love and respect for their offspring is called into question. He writes, "As Scripture points out, it is bastards who are spoiled: the legitimate sons, who are to carry on the family tradition, are punished" (*Problem of Pain* 41; Ch.3).²⁰ Orual claims the authority of a mother to insist that Psyche not remain in bondage to a wicked being, human or supernatural. This claim is, of course, questionable and denied by Istra-Psyche (127; Ch.11), who does, however, grant (generously) that Orual used to have such authority; but by cultural traditions (embodied in King Trom and the Old Priest) the mother's authority has been succeeded by the husband's (be he human or divine).

²⁰ He refers to Hebrews 12:8.

Orual uses emotional blackmail to force Psyche to light a lamp in her marriage chamber, something the unseen bridegroom has forbidden. She is convinced that once Istra-Psyche sees the intolerable being she has been sleeping with, she will flee to rejoin her elder sister. But since (absent such proof) Psyche continues to obey her husband, Orual threatens to kill herself if Psyche will not promise to do as she demands. To show her resolve, in case her sister doubts it, she stabs herself through her arm (164; Ch.14), and thus extracts from Psyche a binding “oath on edge [of a dagger]” (166).²¹ After receiving this promise, Orual waits on the other side of the ford which marks the boundary to Psyche’s lands for Psyche to come to her. She gives the reader no very elaborate account of the reaction she expects from the unseen bridegroom, outlaw or Shadowbrute. Her best hope seems to be that, natural or supernatural, he will simply sleep through everything (169; Ch.15). That a human outlaw might wound or kill Istra for betraying his hiding place only occurs to her later when the Fox suggests the idea (179; Ch.16). A Shadowbrute could take revenge in all kinds of bloodcurdling ways, but she does not ponder this. Nevertheless, somewhat troubled by the thought that the “bridegroom” could after all be something like a “real god” whose loss might break Psyche’s heart, Orual is tempted to go back to her sister and release her from her promise. She admits, however, that most of her emotions, are bound up in self-pity and resentment at the “scorn” and “un-love” with which Istra-Psyche’s expressed her reluctance to take the coerced oath (169; Ch.15).

In the context of the whole book, it is easy to trace the flaws in Orual’s reasoning and the wrongness of her actions. If, however, Lewis had chosen, provocatively, to end the book right here, or if it had been left unfinished by some accident, we might find it more difficult. The book has a realistic texture, and our narrator has never, as yet, directly witnessed anything unambiguously supernatural. Therefore the Fox’s interpretation—that Psyche’s wits have been overwhelmed by the trauma of the sacrifice and by the mind-numbing drugs administered by the priests of Ungit, and that an outlaw has impersonated the divine bridegroom—seems plausible. But if a Glomian quasi-divinity is really involved, as Bardia thinks, one would not expect benevolence or loyalty from such a being. To be sure, the Glomians believe that the gods, when properly adored, will provide necessary good things, such as the rain which grows the crops, and fertility in herds and families. However, the inhabitants of the royal palace evidently take these things for granted until they experience a lack.²²

²¹ Orual also threatens to kill Istra-Psyche if she does not obey, but they both realize that she would be physically unable to do it; see Appendix, table 1, item 8.

²² The common people, it is true, recognize beauty as a divine attribute when they hail Istra-Psyche as a goddess, but they are disorganized and inconsistent in their manner of articulating and displaying this insight, and as we have seen, they are soon cursing her. To

Before drought, plague, famine, and warfare oppressed his kingdom, the monarch thought that Ungit had already persecuted him sufficiently by withholding sons from him despite his many sacrifices (15-16; Ch.2). Orual's understanding of what is holy, from her childhood, is represented by the Old Priest, who carries about the smell of stale blood, "mostly pigeons' blood, but he had sacrificed men, too" (11; Ch.1). Even to the pious Bardia, "bad" is very nearly a synonym for "holy" (100; Ch.9). Psyche's happiness with such deities would probably be short-lived.

No one in the story except Istra-Psyche herself has, as yet, spoken of divine beings whose moral authority can be respected by a princess trained in Stoic virtue by the Fox. Though not permitted to see her husband, Istra perceives him to be benevolent, and asserts that he has "good grounds" (163; Ch.14) for forbidding light in his bedchamber, even though she does not understand them. But to accept the possibility of a benevolent god, Orual must believe her sister's perceptions over her own. She has some obvious grounds for doing so, and equally obvious ones not to. The same is true for modern readers to this point. Favoring Istra-Psyche is the fact that in the ancient myth, Psyche was indeed married to the beautiful god Cupid, despite the malicious intent of his mother Venus. But this is, after all, a modern retelling which has already varied from the original on many points (see Appendix, Table 2). Also favoring Psyche is the apparent maturity with which she faces her ordeal in Chapter 7, and her suggestion that the Fox's concept of the "divine nature" (divorced from belief in actual gods) could serve as a corrective to the Glomian belief in actual gods who practice abominations. Perhaps, she had suggested, "they are real gods but don't really do these things. Or even—mightn't it be—they do these things and the things are not what they seem to be?" (71; Ch.7). If a benevolent deity exists, Istra-Psyche is better prepared to meet him than is her sister.

Still, Psyche has hardly been infallible this far in the narrative. She foolishly allowed herself to be hailed as a goddess against cultural custom (27; Ch.3); though she was only a child when it started, Orual, as a child, knew better (24; Ch.2). Later, she accepted the peoples' notion, encouraged somewhat by the Fox (31; Ch.3), that her hands could heal, and was surprised afterwards to find herself called "the Accursed" by the once adoring populace (39; Ch.4). Later, when she recounts her story of her sacrifice and union with the god in Chapters 10 and 11, she has apparently accepted the Glomian concept that the abominable (by Old Testament standards) and barbaric (by Greek standards) sacrifice she

be sure, after the Old Priest wins his point with the king, the latter has Psyche put under guard, for fear that some of the volatile populace might attempt a rescue (56; Ch.5).

suffered was life-giving for her people.²³ After the worst moments of her abandonment on the mountain, she tells Orual that the “change”²⁴ happened, and “I knew quite well that the gods really are, and that I was bringing the rain” (110; Ch.10). Indeed, the rains had followed “the Great Offering” almost

²³ In this book, Lewis does not closely examine the possibility of demonic inspiration behind abominable religious practices, although that was a traditional Biblical interpretation. Human sacrifice to devils is mentioned, for example, in Psalm 106:37. In 1 Corinthians 10:20, where animal sacrifice is the issue, the Apostle Paul warns Christians not to ignore pagan sacrifices on the grounds that pagan gods are unreal, but instead to recognize the intent of the worshippers to sacrifice to demons. Since worship of Glomian gods involves temple prostitution and human sacrifice, it might have seemed a good candidate for such treatment, but Lewis instead focuses on the projection of human iniquity onto the gods. In the story, Orual’s Hellenizing influence (and her alliance with Arnorn as the successor to the Old Priest) apparently causes human sacrifice to disappear during her reign, but there is still temple prostitution (268-269; Part 2, Ch.2). Myers points out that the disappearance of human sacrifice was in part the result of Orual’s successes in making her kingdom prosperous: “No longer are [the people of Glome] dependent on Ungit’s favor to protect them from the sort of disasters that made it necessary to sacrifice Psyche” (105; Ch.20).

Lewis does explore the idea of demonic interference in his *Space Trilogy*, where it is central to the plots. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, the protagonist, Ransom, learns that Earth is under the sway of an angelic intelligence who has turned evil. In *Perelandra*, Ransom goes to Venus to contend against the scientist Weston, now possessed by a demon, through whom the fallen angel ruling over Earth seeks to destroy the bliss of this unfallen world. In *That Hideous Strength*, fallen angels, revealing themselves to susceptible intellectuals who describe them as *macrobes*, try to spread their corrupting influence over modern civilization, but are foiled through the help of unfallen angels.

Lewis also explores the idea of demons in the Narnian stories, particularly in *The Last Battle*, which, like *Till We Have Faces*, was published in 1956. Here the god Tash appears as a real entity in Chapters 8, 10 and 12. He somewhat resembles the Old Priest of *Till We Have Faces* with his bird-mask (11; Ch.1). Doris Myers also notices this and says that “Lewis probably chose those symbols to demonstrate the non-Olympian, primitive character of Glomian religion” since “Bird and egg are part of both the Pelasgian and the Homeric-Orphic creation myths” (208; Part II).

²⁴ The “change” marks the transition between the worst part of Istra-Psyche’s sufferings and a sudden improvement, but they may also mark her death. Lewis does not quite spell out whether she has died, but it is doubtful whether she is quite mortal any longer. The night before the sacrifice, Psyche had said “[I]f I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death” (72; Ch.7). In her account to Orual later, when asked what she means by “change,” she says, “Oh, the weather, of course” (110; Ch.10). But that is the moment when she first glimpses the god of the West-wind. Perhaps she spares Orual’s feelings by avoiding mention of her death, or perhaps she does not herself understand her own state of existence. Orual perceives her as “taller than before” (124; Ch.11). Perhaps there is an echo of the *Aeneid* 2.773) when the lost Creusa appears to Aeneas, her image larger than she had been in life, indicating that she has become a minor goddess.

immediately, thereby apparently justifying the actions of the Old Priest, though the Fox puts it all down to coincidence (85; Ch.8). Though the latter's insight is incomplete, he is probably at least as correct as Psyche where the literal historical situation is concerned.²⁵ Psyche's apparent health, strength, and ability to tell a coherent story cast doubt on the idea that she is mad, but do not completely refute it.²⁶ Could Orual really be expected to accept from her something which she cannot see for herself?

Of course, refusing to accept Psyche's story in its entirety is one thing; coercing her sister, by threat of suicide, to shine the forbidden light is something else. Even the most sympathetic of readers could not argue that Orual is certainly in the right here. At best, one could claim that she is not clearly wrong, and that she has chosen a desperate remedy for a desperate situation. If she is correct about Psyche's madness, her strategy will destroy only an unstable, delusive happiness for her sister, while offering her some chance of freedom. Also (undoubtedly what motivates Orual most of all), her chosen strategy gives Orual some hope of getting back the most precious thing she ever had: Istra-Psyche as her little sister and companion, with the Fox as their tutor. That Orual is tempted to withdraw her demand shows her real love for her sister. That she is saturated with self-pity is an unpleasant truth, but real people are like that, and if Istra-Psyche is actually the victim of a predator, Orual might still be doing the right thing. Of course, provoking an outlaw is dangerous, and defying the Glomian Shadowbrute more so, even downright crazy, given a religious viewpoint which offers no better divinities than that, and none inclined to keep such monsters under control. Yet C.S. Lewis, elsewhere, expresses sympathy for the heroic impulse to go down fighting on the right side, even in supernatural wars.²⁷

But then the Divine Bridegroom speaks. Until he does, there is no reason to expect any being like him to appear. But at his appearance, readers may remember that Christ, in the New Testament, is often figured as the

²⁵ Lewis surely meant us to understand that Psyche's insight is also incomplete; after all, she cannot see her bridegroom. However, in her willingness to forgive the wrongs done to her and to die to save her people, she shows a Christlike attitude. Her vision that she was "bringing the rain" hints at the beneficence of Christ's perfect sacrifice, to which she has unknowingly joined herself.

²⁶ Doris Myers dwells on these points, in her book, saying "She [Psyche] is obviously not mad" (59). Bardia had made the same assertion, based on his glimpse of her (135; Ch.12); however, modern readers know that madness can be subtle.

²⁷ For example, in *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis's *persona* suggests that if he and his correspondents discovered, after all, that the Christian God were to lose the struggle against evil, they would still be on his side. He refers to the Norse myths in which the gods under "Father Odin" will ultimately be defeated by "Giants and Trolls" (120; Letter XXII), and yet true human warriors long to be fighting in Odin's army.

Bridegroom for humanity and for the Church.²⁸ Psyche's bridegroom also has the Biblical God's attributes of righteousness and omniscience; at any rate, Orual feels morally rebuked in his presence, but she is even more disturbed that he understands what is going on in her mind. As she puts it, "He rejected, denied, answered, and (worst of all) he knew, all I had thought, done or been" (173; Ch.15).

The outcome, as Orual puts it, is that the god changes the past:

A Greek verse says that even the gods cannot change the past.²⁹ But is this true? He made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debates [...] had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself. You, who read my book, judge. Was it so? Or at least, had it been so in the very past, before this god changed the past? And if they can indeed change the past, why do they never do so in mercy? (173; Ch.15)

Since Orual makes it plain that she never told this story to anyone else before she wrote her narration (180; Ch.16), this changing of the past has been, until now, strictly between herself and Psyche's bridegroom. But she does not claim that the god is lying. Seemingly, from then on she can no longer tell the story in a way that shows her to be truly ignorant in her disobedience to the divine. When the aged narrator reaches this part of the story, she admits that she is surprised to find Orual's memory different from the story she thought she was going to tell, since "by remembering it too often, I have blurred the memory itself" (117; Ch.11). At the beginning of Part 2, she again affirms that when she decided to write down the story, she thought it would be different (253).

The revelation of an omniscient observer necessarily changes her understanding of the past, if only because Orual can no longer hide her best

²⁸ See for example Matthew 9:14 and its parallels in Mark 2:19 and Luke 5:34 and John 3:29. See also Ephesians 5:22-31, and Revelations 19-22. Carl Jung gives additional references in "Aion," 37-44. Doris Myers, throughout *Bareface*, shows Lewis's interest in Jung and the applicability of Jungian symbols to the events of the work (see especially her discussion on pp. 197-199). Jungian symbols, however, are more helpful in illuminating Orual's troubles than in providing the solution, since Jung himself shows that solutions to struggles against the "shadow" or "dark aspects of the personality" ("Aion" 7) can only be arrived at by the individual, and he declares that he intends no "intrusion into the sphere of metaphysics, i.e., of faith" (57). In a Jungian sense, the Christian *psyche* in its "completeness" is represented by "the crucified Christ hanging between two thieves" (58); that is, roughly speaking, the human consciousness dedicated to virtue and self-sacrifice, in the most direct conflict with the opposing forces in all their power. Few of us would want to stop there; nor does Orual.

²⁹ Orual's reference to the Greek poem is apparently to Agathon, who, according to *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (p. 74), is quoted in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Ch.2, saying: "This only is denied to God: the power to undo the past."

insights from herself. Telling the story in depth, she finds herself admitting that her first reaction, on hearing of Psyche's palace, was to accept her sister's word for it, though afflicted by desolation that she was cut off from Psyche's new mode of existence (117; Ch.11). Then she thrust this painful perception away and settled on the idea that Psyche was mad (125; Ch.11). Even so, she had a fleeting, visionary glimpse of the palace (132; Ch.12), and still did not change her mind. Thus, even if the riddles posed by Psyche's situation were difficult enough for other mortals from her two cultures to read, she herself, wiser than many, was handed the key and threw it away, because she did not like the answer. She articulates this insight in Part II, where she finds herself shouting, as part of her stripped-down visionary accusation (a parody of the one she actually wrote), "oh, you'll say [...] that I'd signs enough her palace was real, could have known the truth if I'd wanted. But how could I want to know it? Tell me that" (291; Part 2, Ch.3).

When in Chapter 15, the god makes his will known, and Istra-Psyche goes off weeping into exile, Orual understands that she will be punished in the same manner, since he proclaims "You also shall be Psyche" (174; Ch.15). Separation is part of the punishment, and Orual takes it hard. As a flood rises and the mountain crashes down, she demonstrates her love, possessive though it might be, by trying to reach her sister through all the violence, but the river will neither drown her nor let her through. However, she also shows a truer, deeper love, one that will stand the test of time, by expressing satisfaction that she is allowed to share Psyche's punishment, if not her company, and the wish (rejected previously, when she made the offer to her father) that she might suffer instead of Psyche and thereby spare her. Still determined to see the gods as malicious, she supposes that they do not understand this feeling (176; Ch.15). Events will prove her wrong.

At last she makes her way home, expecting divine punishment to befall her in all kinds of picturesque ways (175-176; Ch.17). But what the gods have in mind proves to be a private, emotional exile, imposed by herself. As she attempts (and mostly refuses) to explain to the Fox what she has done, she feels a wish to conceal her guilty face behind a veil (179; Ch.16). Here is the first suggestion that her physical ugliness is a symbol for her spiritual ugliness. It emerges here that despite her father's cruel jibes about her ugliness, she had not accepted her ugliness as an unchangeable fact, and had often tried, with the encouragement of Batta, the nurse, to make herself more attractive in the clothes she wore or the way she dressed her hair (181; Ch.16). Now she accepts it, but the catalyst is an interview with the Fox, who has always loved her despite her looks. Obviously, what she fears from him is insight into her bad actions, that is, into her soul, which he might gain from the subtle changes in her facial expressions as she speaks. Though she only comes to understand this later, she now feels ugly, both

inside and out. Therefore, she places upon herself the sentence of inner exile by putting on, permanently, the veil which she had at first chosen to wear only as a disguise when she traveled to the mountain.

Meanwhile, Glome soon faces another crisis: the king is dying, as a result of injuries brought about by his own carelessness (184; Ch.16). At the same time, the kingdom is threatened with war. Instead of being driven out, Orual is acknowledged as future queen among the ministers (187; Ch.16). To save a desperate situation, she arranges to fight a duel with a neighboring prince, Argan of Phars, over the fate of his brother, the fugitive Prince Trunia of Phars, who has sought refuge at Glome. Whether she lives or dies, this combat offers her kingdom an "honorable" way out of the political muddle, and she regards it as her own "offering" (216; Ch.19), with her opponent acting as "the gods' executioner" (201; Ch.17). The gods, however, grant her victory, and Glome gains a valuable ally in Prince (now King) Trunia.

Orual-Psyche's hard tasks continue with her exercise of queenship. Following the Fox's teachings, she accepts her office as a weighty responsibility through which she serves her kingdom and her people. To the extent that Orual is a human individual with personal fears and emotional needs, she submerges all that into the "Queen," the strong woman with huge responsibilities, upon whom the kingdom depends. "The Queen," now her dominant personality, resolves to "kill Orual" (225; Ch.19), partly because "Orual" is to blame for her sufferings and partly to "cheat" the gods of any satisfaction they might have in doing the job themselves (201; Ch.17). This solution evidently pleases the gods, since Orual is permitted to "queen it" (201; Ch.17) for forty years (291; Part II, Ch.3), bringing glory, prosperity, and peace to her small kingdom. For many years, it is true, she is haunted by the memory of her sister's weeping as she departed into exile, under the doom of the gods, and often thinks she hears the sound; this noise first led her to find the fugitive Prince Trunia, seeking foreign help (189-190; Ch.16). In many ways, at many times, she tries to find her sister, without success, and she stays up late at night, studying many things because she cannot sleep, remembering the past and fearing what Psyche might be facing if she still lives (229-230; Ch.20). Recognizing that a noise like weeping comes from the chains belonging to a well "swinging in the wind," she has the well walled up (235; Ch.20) and eventually ceases to hear it. She is victorious in war (227; Ch.20) but eventually brings her kingdom to peace. As she concludes Part I, her narrative sometimes slips from her intent of accusation, in order to explain her success for her audience, who would no doubt wish to reproduce some of her results. Her acts do credit to her teachers, Bardia and the Fox, to whom she modestly attributes much of her accomplishments (227; Ch.20). In fact, she is now an aged, beloved and highly successful queen, ruling over a wealthy land, in peace.

Apparently, too, late in her reign, she has ceased to think of herself as under punishment by the gods. No longer the gods' enemy, however, she is also not their friend. She has adopted the strategy of wise Glomians such as Bardia, not to "meddle" with the gods (244; Ch.20). In fact, she has almost managed to forget their existence, for "[t]he memory of [the god's] voice and face was kept in one of those rooms of my soul that I didn't lightly unlock" (244-245; Ch.20). To be sure, she subtly encourages the new priest, Arnom, in his own tendency to Hellenize Glomian religion, to the extent possible, and helps him to purchase a beautiful statue in "Greek fashion" for Ungit's House (234; Ch.20), to dampen the memory and weaken the power of the threatening, demanding Ungit for whom the Old Priest had spoken. It is hard to imagine Arnom making a demand for a "great offering," or even cutting someone's throat "in a bad year" as the Old Priest had done.

In short, Orual has not suffered a conventional Graeco-Babylonian doom for overweening mortals who offend the gods. But then, on a journey to neighboring Essur, she finds the new temple to a new goddess called "Istra." She makes a small offering and asks to hear the "sacred story," which turns out to be a brief version of the "Cupid and Psyche" tale, with some names changed. Princess Istra had two jealous elder sisters who, after she has become the bride of the god, visit her in her glorious palace and provoke her into disobeying her husband because they wish to ruin her. Angered by the slander, particularly the idea that the sisters both saw the palace, the queen sets out to write the true story, "letting Orual wake and speak, digging her almost out of a grave" (247; Ch.21) so that she can accuse the gods.

But though the aged narrator believes that she wakened the original Orual, this is not really possible, since the years and the task of queenship have transformed her. The original Orual (perhaps like the caterpillar in the life-cycle producing the butterfly) is gone. The narrator-Queen is actually like the being in the chrysalis, not quite a butterfly yet, perhaps with filmy butterfly wings, but not quite ready to spread them and fly. The writing of the first portion of the narrative wakens this intermediate creature to active life and accelerates its development. In the course of her writing, she discovers the story is not what she thought it was, but she works up sufficient indignation to make her peroration at the end of Part I:

Now, you who read, judge between the gods and me. They gave me nothing in the world to love but Psyche and then took her from me. [...] They would not tell me whether she was the bride of a god, or mad, or a brute's or villain's spoil. They would give no clear sign, though I begged for it. I had to guess. And because I guessed wrong, they punished me— [...] I say, therefore, that there is no creature (toad, scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods. Let them answer my charge if they can. It may

well be that, instead of answering, they'll strike me mad or leprous or turn me into beast, bird, or tree. But will not all the world then know (and the gods will know it knows) that this is because they have no answer? (248-250; Ch.21)

Evidently, it is what Orual meant to conclude when she began her narrative, though she undercut many of the claims in the course of her writing. Part II follows, begun, we are told, "not many days" later, as thoughts, perceptions, and new visions alter her view of the past still further. In the four short chapters of Part II, the narrator's insight lags behind that of the aged queen, as she gleans fresh understandings from each new encounter and vision. At the end, Orual's dead body and a book represent the burst cocoon from which the real *Psyche* or butterfly has flown away.

In Part II, Orual comes to understand that she lacks "beauty of soul" (282; Part II, Ch.3) much as she lacks physical beauty. That she spends so much time discovering, acknowledging, and analyzing her vices shows, paradoxically, her growth in character, since as Lewis points out in *Mere Christianity*:

When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less. A moderately bad man knows he is not very good: a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right. This is common sense, really. [...] You can understand the nature of drunkenness when you are sober, not when you are drunk. Good people know about both good and evil: bad people do not know about either. (79; Ch.4)

Much of Part I was actually an attempt to refute the gods' implicit charge that she was ugly in her soul. In Part II, she accepts this and also realizes that "beauty of soul," unlike beauty of body, is something she cannot dispense with. Giving up on concealment, she takes off the veil she had put on in Part I and tries to obtain the beauty which she needs. In a series of visions, the mythological tasks of Psyche unfold before her, and she sees that while she has a share in them, her attempts to accuse the gods have obstructed her.

The first task, sorting the pile of mixed seeds, "wheat, barley, poppy, rye, millet, what not" (256; Part II, Ch.1) refers to Orual's writing of the narrative. In the original myth, the captive Psyche is commanded to sort a huge pile of every kind of seed, which the angry Venus has heaped into one great mass, into separate piles of each kind of seed. Thus, Orual, in a dream, sees herself at work, in an endless and apparently hopeless process of separating and sorting. She interprets it as the process of sifting of her own various motives. In the original myth, Psyche cannot do this alone, but ants, inspired by devotion to the god of love, come to help her. Orual, however, also sees herself as an ant, lifting each grain, one by one. This suggests the slowness, but perhaps also, the

relentlessness with which she works at the difficult undertaking of understanding herself, bit by bit and year by year.³⁰ For though writing the story of her life is the task that finally obliges her to sift her own motives where her actions toward Psyche are concerned, her years of queenship, sorting others' motives, or sorting her own options and motives regarding matters of state, are a necessary preparation for this. Later, in another vision, she sees her Psyche at the same task, helped by many ants. It seems that years of Orual-Psyche's effort have all come to Istra-Psyche's service at once (299; Part II, Ch.4).

After sorting her own motives, Orual is ready to learn that what she detests in the goddess Ungit is also found in her own nature. Therefore, in a vision, her long-dead father forces her to confront her image in a mirror, as he once did in her youth, to show that she was not worthy to be a sacrificial bride for the god of the Mountain (62; Ch.6). This time, however, she perceives not her physical but her spiritual ugliness. "I am Ungit," she admits (276; Part II, Ch.2).

Before she makes the admission, her Ungit-like nature has been suggested to her in a bitter interview with Ansit, Bardia's widow, who accuses her of being like the gods and of having "devoured" Bardia, by demanding too much work and attention from him (Part II, Ch.1, 265). Her response shows her growing spiritual awareness. Though Ansit's rude words inspire murderous thoughts, Orual reports "[s]omething [...] made me unable" to order the widow's death by torture, and "if it was the gods, I bless their name" (265; Part II, Ch.1). While this shows a more positive turn in her relationship with the divine bridegroom, it is presumably the Stoic "god within" her, as the Fox would put it (180; Ch.16), or in modern terms, her conscience, which guides her. Too close to death for ordinary prudence to restrain her, she refrains from revenge simply because she knows that it would be wrong. Besides this, she recognizes truth in Ansit's words. However, she does not make the mistake of supposing that Ansit herself is free from this possessiveness which the latter attributes to her. The women share a moment of sympathy when Orual removes her veil, in an effort to reassure the widow that she was not a rival for Bardia's sexual love. Ansit, who until that moment saw Orual as a cold-hearted task-master,³¹ suddenly

³⁰ This is also, as I said in my previous article, "an amusing comment on the nature of rational thinking" (Hood 42).

³¹ Doris Myers states that Orual's attitude toward Ansit, when Bardia was alive, is "contradictory and confused," since "Orual says she wanted to love Bardia's wife, but she is pleased when Ansit seems jealous of her closeness to Bardia" (110; Ch.20). A close reading, however, may reveal an underlying consistency. Orual protests that her behavior toward Ansit was "loving," and that "I would have loved her indeed, for Bardia's sake, if I could have done it"; however, Ansit obstructed her good will by being always "mute as a mouse" in her presence, and by suggesting in her manner that she disliked the queen (233; Ch.20). Orual guesses that she is "jealous," and exults in it, comparing the genuine

realizes that the queen loved her husband (263; Part II, Ch. 1). The two weep in one another's arms before continuing their quarrel. As Orual leaves, she realizes that they are fellow sinners as well as fellow sufferers, and that Ansit had "welcomed him home [...] to a bitter hearth" because of her "jealousy of [Orual]" (266-267; Part 2, Ch.1).

Ansit's words indeed show that she, in her rivalry with the queen, is much like the younger Orual in her rivalry with the gods. She even accuses Orual of being like the gods from whom her family is supposedly descended, to the extent that her love, like theirs, is a kind of devouring (265; Part 1, Ch.1). Unlike Orual, she clearly articulates reasons why she should not insist on having Bardia with her all the time. That would be to "make him so mine that he was no longer his" (264; Part 2, Ch.1). Though Orual needs to ponder this insight, Ansit pretends to ignore another side of the question: she would risk losing Bardia's love (as Orual lost Psyche's) if she had had come between Bardia and the career that he found meaningful. Ansit also expresses displeased resignation that her son, Ilerdia, also in royal service, "will seek strange lands, and be occupied with matters I don't understand [...] and be daily less mine—and more his own and the world's" (264). Her words imply the existence of a private life completely withdrawn from external affairs, where Ansit once, a dowerless girl whom Bardia married for her beauty (146, Ch.13; 266, Part II, Ch.1), could have kept her loved ones to herself, not missing the status which their royal service gave them all, not to mention the benefits they gained from living in a kingdom powerful enough to repel enemies and foster prosperity. In the same way, Orual had secretly dreamed of restoring Istra, when she discovered her alive after the Great Offering, to their happy childhood, without acknowledging that such happiness and prosperity was not hers to give. The aged Orual considers calling Ansit's bluff by sending Ilerdia away from court (265-266; Part II, Ch.1). But from this too, she refrains. She now understands that her own spiritual ugliness is her main concern, not Ansit's. Biased though Ansit may be,³² she has revealed a truth

companionship she enjoyed with Bardia favorably to Ansit's sexual and conjugal love: "She's his toy, his recreation, his leisure, his solace. I'm in his man's life" (233, Ch.20). But her words in Part II suggest that she did not expect Ansit to envy the glories of her *camaraderie* with Bardia. At that time, she apparently unveiled to reassure the widow that there was not, and could not have been, a sexual relationship—on the assumption that only that would really have made Ansit jealous. Ansit soon proves her wrong, and the scene degenerates into a disorderly exchange of claims and insults. In the previous scene, however, Orual's celebration of her superior relationship with Bardia represents her (self-righteous) denial of actual adultery and her (self-deceptive) protestations that she preferred the comradesly relationship she already had.

³² Another instance of Ansit's bias is her reaction to Orual's statement that she had saved Bardia's life in battle. Ansit retorts that this was "thrift" since Bardia was so useful to her

that Orual cannot deny; the queen now remembers that she had invented unnecessary work for Bardia "for the mere pleasure of hearing his voice," that she subtly created conversational humiliations for him because she resented his wife's demands on him, and she had even fantasized that he would forsake Ansit and turn to her for love (266-267). Hating herself, she attempts suicide, but the god appears once more and stops her. "You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands," he informs her, "for she is there also. Die before you die. There is no chance after" (279; Ch.2).

By this, Orual understands that she must destroy the ugly "Ungit" within her by ceasing, forever, to display the behaviors she detests in the goddess; "dying" means ridding herself of "passions and desires and vain opinions," in short, it means practicing philosophy. She is aware that Socrates, speaking with friends "before he drank the hemlock" (that is, in the *Phaedo*), had described "true wisdom" as "the skill and practice of death" (281; Ch.3). During her queenship, she had learned to hold most of her destructive impulses in check because of the practical needs of her kingdom. Now she attempts perfection for its own sake. Her quick recognition of her own futility shows her wisdom. She realizes that she lacks the power to make herself spiritually beautiful and must somehow obtain the beauty from elsewhere. Her remaining visions are all concerned with this problem. The glorious golden sheep of Psyche's second task represent the beauty she wants, but when she goes toward the sheep, they trample her painfully, perhaps without being aware of her. Later she sees another mortal (whom she does not yet recognize as her sister) easily gathering the wool rubbed off on thorns. As Orual reports, "She won without effort what the utmost effort would not win for me" (284).³³ It seems that there is plenty of divine beauty to gather, for those who take what is offered.

(265; Part II, Ch.1). This taunt cannot really be taken as an objective description of Orual's conduct. When Orual saved Bardia's life, which is, she said, the only "notable [military] deed" she did, she had "galloped in" when she saw him being ambushed and "hardly knew what I was doing till the matter was over." She "killed seven men with my own strokes" and was wounded herself (227; Ch.20). Even though, objectively speaking, Bardia's services were of great value to the kingdom, she acted from the impulse of love, distorted through it might be, not from calculation.

³³ There may be a link between the task of the golden wool and the subtle things Orual later does to provide graciousness and beauty in the kingdom, for the sake of the others (and of the kingdom) and not herself. Her actions regarding the Glomian silver mines may parallel Psyche's descent into the Underworld for the cask of beauty. For her father, the Silver Mines had mainly been an instrument of slow death for criminals and slaves with whom he was angry, but she transforms it into a prospering concern which could make miners rich; then she uses some of the resultant wealth to have a beautiful statue of Aphrodite made in Hellenized lands and brought to Glome, where it is placed before the ancient "shapeless" stone of Ungit. The purpose of Psyche's journey to the underworld was indeed to fetch

But Orual has been trying to win beauty in a lawsuit, a tactic she must abandon. Psyche's third task finds her wandering across burning sands and up deadly mountains for the waters of the River Styx or "water of death," as she calls it, still seeking death before she dies.³⁴ This is a retrospective look at all her years since she lost her sister, for in Chapter 17 of Part I, she had described the life ahead of her as "a sandy waste" (201). In her vision, the journey lasts "a hundred years" (286; Ch.3). It is disrupted when she finds that instead of a bowl, she is carrying a book. As she observes, "This ruined everything" (287; Ch.3). A book is not an instrument for holding the water she needs to receive as a gift. However, a divine eagle brings her to court, where she is allowed to present her argument. First, however, she is stripped not only of her veil but of her clothing. Her book, also stripped of all its obfuscations and distracting ornamentation, is "far too small" (289) to be the one she has labored over, and in reading it, she finds herself speaking words that are both mean-spirited and self-defeating. As she exclaims in a key passage,

"You stole [Psyche] to make her happy, did you? Why, every wheedling, smiling, catfooted rogue who lures away another man's wife or slave or dog might say the same. Dog, now. That's very much to the purpose. I'll thank you to let me feed my own; it needed no titbits from your table. Did you ever remember whose the girl was? She was mine. *Mine*." (292; Part II, Ch.3).

When the judge calls "enough," she is happy to agree that she is "answered" by the mere presentation of case (293; Part II, Ch.3).³⁵ We know that

beauty for Venus (234; Ch.20). Orual mentions her successful insinuation of the new statue into Ungit's house as "a defeat" for the goddess, even though the new priest dares not remove the old stone idol for fear of popular wrath (234; Ch.20). The persisting presence of the old stone suggests that the task of making Ungit beautiful, though undertaken, is incomplete by the end of Part I. Thus, Orual's activities as queen represent the beginning of Psyche's tasks, but not their successful conclusion.

³⁴ Walsh suggests that in the original myth, water gathered from the Styx might be used for oath-taking among the gods (215), since gods dared not break oaths sworn by the Styx. No particular explanation of this task, or any other, is incorporated into the narrative of Apuleius, and as Walsh says, some commentators note that since with the river Styx is from the underworld, it seems to duplicate the fourth task, the descent into the Underworld (214). In Lewis's treatment, they are closely connected thematically, the bowl of water with Orual's long attempt to deal with the command "die before you die," getting rid of the negative character of Ungit's ugliness, and the final task with its positive solution, to make Ungit beautiful with the beauty that comes from the Underworld.

³⁵ Also, she realizes that she has read her complaint "over and over—perhaps a dozen times" (292; Part II, Ch.3). Orual's presentation of her complaint resembles the obsessive behavior of the hell-bound characters in *The Great Divorce*. About such people, Lewis's

the narrative of Part I is much richer in content than the parody in this chapter, but to the extent that Orual kept to her task of accusing the gods, this was its true meaning, motivation, and tone.

Now she is ready to receive divine gifts. In the underworld setting the Fox joins her (296; Part II, Ch.4), and once more becomes her teacher and guide. He leads her to a hall in "greenish, summery light" (297) where Istra-Psyche's tasks are presented as a sort of living mural. As they observe all of them, he tells her that she and her sister have been linked in their ordeals, which Istra-Psyche apparently experienced in direct mythological fashion, while Orual-Psyche felt them emotionally and in vision. Thus, the elder "bore almost all of the anguish," while her younger sister "achieved the tasks."³⁶ The Fox explains, "That was one of the true things I used to say to you. [...] We're all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle" (300-301, Ch.4).

Thus, Orual learns the gods have allowed her to do the very thing she so deeply wanted, to share her wronged sister's punishment and shield her from some of her suffering (176; Ch.15). Her offering, thus, was accepted, even though her father had once called her unworthy (62; Ch.6). When she understands this, Orual cries, without reservations or conditions, "I give thanks. I bless the gods," (301; Part II, Ch.4). Her sister then completes the last task, and brings her the casket of beauty from the underworld. The divine bridegroom appears and proclaims that she is now "also [...] Psyche" (308; Part II, Ch.4).

guide, George MacDonald, comments that the question is whether they are "grumblers" or merely "grumbles." "Grumblers," he explains, can still be saved; but there is no hope for those whose personalities have been entirely lost in the "grumble" (74; Ch.9). Happily Orual, since she is able to stop, is still a "grumbler."

³⁶ The Fox's idea, though expressed in Stoic terms, also invokes "Co-inherence," a favorite motif of Charles Williams, one of Lewis's fellow Inklings. In his book, *Inklings*, Humphrey Carpenter explains this concept as "one of Williams's central ideas, which had first grown in his mind during the 1914-1918 war, when his grief at the death of the two close friends of his Working Men's College days eventually persuaded him that all human beings are totally dependent on each other, that indeed 'no man is an Island', and that each thought or action has a bearing on other people" (103). This developed into the idea people could choose or be chosen to bear another's "personal burdens" and not merely physical and financial ones (104-105). Williams treats this idea, for example, in his novel *Descent into Hell*. That Lewis was struck and intrigued by this idea of "exchange" is revealed in his words to a friend when he and his wife, Joy, were both ill: "The intriguing thing is that while I (for no discoverable reason) was losing the calcium from my bones, Joy, who needed it much more, was gaining it in hers. One dreams of a Charles Williams substitution! Well, never was gift more gladly given; but one must not be fanciful" (qtd in Carpenter, *Inklings* 246).

As we learn from a postscript by Arnem, the "New Priest," Orual died shortly after she recorded this vision. His words put Orual's life in quite a favorable light: he says that she "was the most wise, just, valiant, fortunate and merciful of all the princes known in our parts of the world" (308-309; Part II, Ch.4). When she undertook the narration of Part II, she said that she really should write her whole story over again "from the beginning," but as death is approaching, she can only "add to it" (253; Ch.1). Had she rewritten the story as she at first intended, it would be quite different. No longer intending to accuse the gods or to justify herself, she might describe the promise and the beauty of the world around her. Perhaps she would lay less stress on those things in life which she missed because of her physical ugliness, and more on the things she gained which, she later admits, would have been impossible for a beautiful woman (227-228; Ch.20). Instead of claiming that rulership was nothing more than a distraction from her sufferings, like "a hunt or a game" (236; Ch.20), she might acknowledge that the kingdom and her subjects were, in effect, her children, whom she "nursed and trained" to maturity and self-government (237; Ch.20). Her long war against the god of the mountain might become a vigorous training bout, like those she enjoyed with Bardia. But Lewis wisely leaves this to our imagination, since no doubt her contemplation of her past would only become more beautiful as she came to understand its contribution to the whole, and she would have to keep telling the story differently. Her subjects, meanwhile, have her example, which, though more pragmatic and worldly than the myth of Psyche, still conveys a sense of divine benevolence working to make past, present and future more beautiful.

APPENDIX: APULEIUS'S STORY COMPARED AND CONTRASTED WITH LEWIS'S.

All my citations from Apuleius's version of the tale are given by book and chapter number from the Helm edition, and by the page number of the Graves translation. Graves's chapters do not match the division of books in the Latin edition, so I do not reproduce them. Readers will notice that it is hard to describe parallel elements without noting contrasts, and vice versa, but it is worthwhile to consider the stories from both perspectives.

Table I: Parallel Elements in the two versions of "Cupid and Psyche"

		Lucius Apuleius—2 nd Century AD	C.S. Lewis
1	Location	Not named; within reach of "the most ancient oracle of the Milesian god, [dei Milessii vetustissimum]" (Lib IV, Ch.32-33); apparently Apollo's oracle at Miletus (Graves 99-100) in Asia Minor.	Glome; location imprecise (Lewis's invention). Far away from Greece.
2	Psyche's family	A king has three daughters, Psyche being the youngest. (The two older daughters are given no names.)	King Trom has three daughters, Psyche being the youngest. (The two older sisters are given names, Orual and Redival, respectively, and they have distinct personalities.)
3	Oracle	The king sends to consult Apollo's oracle (Lib IV, Ch.32-33; Graves 99-100).	The Old Priest interprets omens and invokes ancient custom; there is a council in which "holy lots" are "cast" (51; Ch.5).
4	Sacrifice	Psyche is adorned as a bride and abandoned on a high cliff (Lib IV, Ch.33-34; Graves 101-102).	Istra-Psyche is adorned as a bride (or temple prostitute), taken to the Grey Mountain and left bound to the Holy Tree for the Shadowbrute; Ch.8 (Orual's viewpoint) and Ch.10 (Istra-Psyche's viewpoint).
5	Marriage	Psyche is blown from the cliff by Zephyr (god of the West Wind), and finds herself in a lovely valley. Here she is received into a beautiful palace and waited on by invisible attendants. Her bridegroom visits her at night, unseen (Lib IV, Ch.35-Lib V, Ch.4; Graves 102-104).	In her account to Orual, Istra-Psyche states that the god of the West-wind freed her from her shackles and carried her to a lovely valley, where she was received into a beautiful palace and waited on by invisible attendants. She is visited at night by a bridegroom whom she does not see (Ch.10-11).

6	Renewed meeting with sisters	When they come bewailing Psyche's fate, both sisters are allowed to visit and are royally entertained.	Orual comes intending to bury her sister's body, with the help of Bardia, the captain of the guard, and is allowed to visit Istra-Psyche. Redival knows nothing about it. However, in the "sacred story" told at Essur, Istra had two jealous sisters who both visited her palace and were royally entertained (Ch.21); this version infuriates Orual.
7	Sister learns that Psyche is not allowed to see her husband	At first Psyche conceals the fact that she has never seen her husband, and tells inconsistent stories about his appearance. However when, on their second visit, the sisters falsely tell Psyche they have heard that her husband is a great serpent who will devour her and her child, Psyche in terror confesses that she has never seen her husband and asks their advice (Lib V, Ch.4-19; Graves 104-115).	Psyche truthfully tells Orual that she has never seen her husband, and that she is forbidden to bring light into their bedchamber (Ch.10-11). After leaving her, Orual consults with Bardia and the Fox, and then returns to tell her sister (misleadingly) that both these men agree that her unseen husband is either an outlaw or a supernatural monster of some kind.
8	Sisters' advice	The sisters advise Psyche to bring a lamp and a sharp knife to her bedchamber, to light the lamp and use the knife to kill her husband. She accepts this as the wisest course (Lib V, Ch.20-21; Graves 115-116).	Orual threatens to kill her sister and herself unless Istra-Psyche will swear to take the lantern she brings and light it in her marriage chamber. Istra points out that Orual has no power to harm her, and thus, "All your power over me lies in the other" (165; Ch.14), that is, in Orual's threat to kill herself. But since Istra-Psyche cannot let her sister die this way, she swears the "oath on edge" which "is our strongest in Glome" in order to prevent her sister's suicide (166; Ch.14).
9	Psyche's disobedience	Psyche lights the lamp and sees the beautiful Cupid. She forgets about the knife and kisses her husband instead. However, she spills oil from the lamp on him,	From across the river Orual sees the lamp lighted and hears Istra-Psyche's heartbroken weeping. The god manifests himself to Orual and

		and he wakes up. He flies away in a rage (Lib V, Ch.21-22; Graves 116-118).	pronounces a mysterious doom, not with “what men call anger” but with “passionless and measureless rejection” (173; Ch.15). The mountain crashes down amid storm and earthquake (171-175; Ch.15).
10	Psyche attempts suicide	In despair at Cupid’s desertion, Psyche throws herself into a river, but the river, suspecting that Cupid would not approve and not wanting to deal with his anger, casts Psyche out unharmed. The god Pan sees her and tries to sooth her, urging her not to kill herself but to seek reconciliation with her husband (Lib. V, Ch.25; Graves 118-121).	Orual-Psyche repeatedly tries to join her sister across the stormy river (Ch.15) but it neither drowns her nor lets her through. In Part II, Orual tries to drown herself, and “the god” appears once more forbidding it (279; Part II, Ch.2). Later, she has a vision of Istra-Psyche trying, as she did, to drown herself, but breaking off the attempt (298; Part II, Ch.4).
11	Sorting the seeds	For the first task given to Psyche, Venus mixes together many different kinds of seeds into one great pile and orders her to separate them into different piles before evening. She cannot do this, but ants, sympathetic to Cupid, do it for her (Lib. VI, Ch.10-11; Graves 133).	In dreams, Orual sees herself working at the task of sorting many kinds of seeds; she does not know why she is bound to accomplish this task. She works first as a woman, then as an ant (256; Part II, Ch.1). Later, she sees her sister, Istra-Psyche, at the task, and being helped by ants (299; Part II, Ch.4).
12	Golden wool	Venus instructs Psyche to get wool from golden sheep belonging to the sun. A reed tells her that the sheep are too dangerous to approach during the day, but when the sun is setting, it is safe to collect the wool they have rubbed off on the briars in their pasture. She succeeds in getting the wool this way (Lib. VI, Ch.12-13; Graves 134).	Orual seeks the golden wool, which symbolizes beauty for her, and is trampled by the sheep, which represent the “Divine Nature” (284; Part II, Ch.3). Later she sees another woman, eventually revealed as her sister Psyche, gathering the wool from the thorns (284; Part II, Ch.3, and 299; Part II, Ch.4).
13	Water from the Styx	Venus sends Psyche to fill a jar from a place where the Styx falls from a high mountain. Jupiter’s eagle, perceiving that the task is beyond her power, fills the jar for	Orual sees herself crossing a burning desert, apparently carrying a bowl to fetch the “water of death” for Ungit (286; Part II, Ch.3). When the eagle

		her (Lib. VI, Ch.12-13; Graves 135-136.)	questions her, she perceives that she is carrying a book. Later she sees the eagle fill the jar for Psyche (300; Part II, Ch.4).
14	Descent into the underworld	Venus gives Psyche a small casket and instructs her to go to the underworld and ask the goddess Proserpine for enough beauty to last a day, to make up for the beauty she has lost in tending her son. Psyche takes this as a command for her death and climbs up a high tower to jump off. But the tower speaks and gives her precise instructions for going to the underworld and coming back alive (Lib VI, Ch.16-19; Graves 136-139).	No clear description is given of the origin of this task, but Istra-Psyche has apparently descended into the underworld to fetch the beauty that Orual-Ungit needs to be reconciled with Psyche and the god of the mountain (302; Part II, Ch.4).
15	Reconciliation	Cupid goes to Jupiter to ask him to make Psyche a goddess and agree to their marriage. Jupiter grants this, and the wedding is celebrated. Venus relents and looks on them with favor (Lib VI, Ch.17-21; Graves 140-143).	Psyche returns successfully with her casket of beauty and presents it to her sister Orual, so that she becomes beautiful. The God of the mountain appears and pronounces that Orual is also Psyche (308; Part II, Ch.4). (Since Lewis implies—although it is not specifically revealed—that the divine bridegroom represents Christ, there is no need for a special request to Jupiter to bring about the apotheosis of either sister, since Lewis demonstrates elsewhere that becoming “divine” in a sense is an intrinsic aspect of union with Christ; see note 2.)
16	Religious ferment and confusion	Within the tale “Cupid and Psyche,” a variety of other Graeco-Roman deities are influential besides Venus and Cupid, including Apollo, who speaks through the oracle when consulted (Lib IV, Ch.32-33; Graves 99-100), and Zephyr, who	Lewis puts less emphasis on the variety of deities and cults. Though the narrative suggests that Glome recognizes the existence of many gods and goddesses, clearly Ungit and her son are of paramount importance, although they are

		<p>does the bidding of Cupid in Books IV and V. Ceres, Juno, Mercury, Proserpine, and Jupiter appear in Books V and VI. In the larger narrative of the <i>Metamorphoseon</i> or <i>The Golden Ass</i>, Lucius also encounters divinities and cults foreign to the Graeco-Roman pantheon, for example the <i>dea Syria</i> (Lib. VIII Ch.24—Lib. IX, Ch.11) or “Great Goddess of Syria” (Graves 187-200), with whose entourage he travels. The Miller’s wife, who is his mistress for a time, is probably a Christian, since she practices a “feigned sacrilege of a religion” dealing with “a god whom she proclaimed to be unique” (“<i>religionis mentita sacrilege [...] dei, quem praedicaret unicum</i>”—Lib. IX Ch.14; Graves 204). In the end, Lucius is restored to human form by the intervention of the goddess Isis, who claims to be “<i>deorum dearumque facies uniformis</i>” (Lib. XI, Ch.5) or “the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are” (Graves 264). Later he is initiated into the service of Osiris, described as “<i>deus deum magnorum potior</i>” (Lib. XI, Ch.30) “the most powerful of all the gods” (Graves 287).</p>	<p>named differently in neighboring countries (for example, in the “Sacred Story” of Essur, Ungit is called Talapal (242; Ch.21). The Old Priest implies that gods appear in a variety of forms and states that they “flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river” (50; Ch.5). Istra-Psyche mentions the god of the West-wind (111; Ch.1) (equivalent to Zephyr), but does not assign him a name. The Fox names Greek deities, especially Aphrodite (8; Ch.1), but does not assign a name to her son. The lesser variety and greater mystery forces readers to consider the reality which may lie behind the stories. Lewis no doubt expects his reader to assume that the God whom Orual finally meets is the God of the Bible, but he does not specifically say so.</p>
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Table II: Contrasting Elements in two versions of “Cupid and Psyche”

		Apuleius	Lewis
1	Parents of Psyche	King and Queen are parents to all three daughters and neither parent dies in the course of the story.	King Trom marries twice; Orual and Redival were born to his first queen and Istra-Psyche to his second. Both queens have died by the end of Chapter 2.

			All three daughters grow up motherless, under the care of a nurse (Batta) and a tutor (the Fox).
2	Status of family	Initially, Psyche's family is fortunate except that no suitors seek marriage with the youngest princess. The two elder princesses have both been married to kings (Lib. IV, Ch 32; Graves 99).	As the story opens, Glome and its royal family are isolated politically because Trom's marriage with Psyche's mother, the daughter of the King of Caphad, has involved them in that king's troubles. Hence, as Orual says, "No neighbouring houses of divine blood (and ours cannot lawfully marry into any other) would take [King Trom's] daughters or give him theirs" (30; Ch.3). Thus, none of the sisters is married and Trom has no living queen when the demand for the "Great Offering" is made.
3	Beauty	All three sisters are beautiful, but Psyche is preternaturally so (Lib. IV, Ch 28; Graves 96).	Orual, the eldest sister, is ugly (11; Ch.1); Redival is beautiful (22; Ch.2), and Istra-Psyche is preternaturally beautiful (22; Ch.2).
4	Education of Psyche	No details are given.	King Trom's daughters are educated by a learned Greek called the Fox, purchased as a slave by King Trom, who hoped to have a son to educate.
5	Reason for divine anger against Psyche	Venus instigates her son, Cupid, against Psyche because people have deserted her altars to worship Psyche. Venus urges Cupid to cause her to fall in love with some monstrous or worthless being (Lib. IV, Ch.28-31. Graves 99). Subsequently, Psyche fails to attract human suitors, apparently a symptom of divine displeasure, since neither Venus nor Cupid does anything on her behalf, Venus from hostility and Cupid evidently because he has chosen Psyche for	The demand for the "Great Offering" is provoked by the troubles in Glome, including war, plague, drought, and famine. That Istra-Psyche has been hailed as a goddess has drawn the wrath of Ungit's priest and perhaps of Ungit herself, but it does not clearly emerge as the main reason for Glome's precarious situation. Mysteriously, the victim for the "Great Offering," also called "the Accursed" is simultaneously offensive and

		himself, which could, given Apollo's description of him (see item 6 below) be a valid fulfilment of his mother's decree, though this is not specifically stated. Later he tells Psyche that he had wounded himself with his own arrow (Lib. V, Ch.24; Graves 119).	pleasing to the gods, execrated and yet honored (Ch.5).
6	Background of Oracle demanding Psyche's abandonment on a mountain	Psyche's parents, disturbed because their youngest daughter has no suitors, send to inquire at Apollo's oracle, and receive the command to abandon her on a high cliff for a world-destroying monster (Lib IV, Ch.32-33; Graves 99-100). This seems to be one of Apuleius's philosophical jokes, since Stoics such as Empedocles believed that universe ran in cycles, periodically dissolving into chaos and then beginning anew. The cause of this destroying conflagration was love or <i>Amor</i> (Grandgent 111, note 42) one of Cupid's names. That is why the truthful Apollo can describe Cupid as the oracle does.	In the context of plague, famine, and threats of war, the Old Priest has "holy lots" drawn to determine the proper victim (51-55; Ch.5). Istra is chosen.
7	Bridegroom's divine status	Cupid is Venus's son as in the traditional pantheon, and in theory under her authority, until he persuades Jupiter to overrule her.	In the "sacred story" told in Essur, the bridegroom is called Ialim, son of the mother goddess Talapal (242; Ch.21), much as, in Apuleius's story, Cupid is the son of Venus. In the main narrative (told by Orual) his identity is more mysterious, since "the Brute" who devours the sacrifice could be "Ungit herself, or Ungit's son, or both" (48-49; Ch.5). Retrospectively, it can be seen that in Part I of the narrative, Orual perceives Ungit and her son through the lens of fallen human nature, while in Part I,

			Ungit emerges as a representation of sinning and suffering humanity, while her son represents Christ who redeems human nature. See Note 8.
8	Palace	When Psyche's sisters visit after her funereal wedding, the palace is clearly visible, and they have no trouble enjoying the entertainment.	Orual, who visits the sacrificed Istra-Psyche without their sister Redival, cannot see or feel the palace. It also does not keep off rain (125; Ch.11). However, she does have one brief visionary glimpse of it (132; Ch.12). However, the "sacred story" says that both sisters visit, see the palace and enjoy the entertainment (242-245; Ch.21). This account enrages Orual.
9	Sisters' desertion	After they have persuaded Psyche to attempt to murder her husband, the sisters flee to their own homes to avoid danger (Lib V, Ch.20-21; Graves 115-116).	Orual remains as close by as she is allowed, after she has tempted Istra-Psyche to light the lamp. She hopes to escape with her. She repeatedly tries to join her sister when earthquake and flood apparently announce divine wrath (Ch.15).
10	Psyche's pregnancy	Cupid tells Psyche that she is pregnant, and that her child will be immortal only if she obeys his prohibition against seeing him (Lib. V, Ch.11; Graves 111). She tells her sisters of her pregnancy, and they mention it in their warnings about her supposedly monstrous husband's intentions. Venus mocks Psyche for her pregnancy and expresses outrage about it (Lib. VI, Ch.9; Graves 132). After Cupid and Psyche are married, she bears a daughter called <i>Voluptas</i> (Lib. VI, Ch.24) or "Pleasure" (Graves 143).	The Fox fears that Istra-Psyche may be pregnant by the outlaw who is, he thinks, pretending to be her divine bridegroom (145; Ch.13). This is not true, and does not become a plot element.
11	Psyche's continual despair	Psyche attempts suicide not only immediately after Cupid's desertion, but also when she is assigned the task of the golden	Lewis emphasizes that after being warned away from the first suicide attempt, neither Orual nor her sister tries again.

		<p>wool and the descent to the underworld for beauty. Each time she is warned away by magical or supernatural entities who tell her how to accomplish her task instead of killing herself. In the first case it is a reed on the banks of the river where she will try to drown herself (Lib. VI, Ch.12; Graves 134), and in the second case, it is the tower from which she is about to throw herself down (Lib. VI, Ch.17; Graves 137).</p>	<p>When Orual has her vision of Psyche's performance of the tasks, she marvels at how cheerful she looks. That is when the Fox explains, "Another bore nearly all the anguish" (300; Part II, Ch.4). She then understands that she and her sister have shared the tasks.</p>
12	Sisters' fate	<p>After Cupid flies away in wrath, Psyche visits each sister and tells each that Cupid has decided to marry her instead of his disobedient bride. Each jumps off the high cliff where Psyche was abandoned, expecting Zephyr to convey her to the palace as before (Lib. V, Ch.27; Graves 100-121). Thus, both die.</p>	<p>Istra-Psyche does not desire vengeance. Both her sisters continue with their lives. Redival marries Trunia, King of Phars, with whom Orual has made an alliance, and Orual becomes reigning queen of Glome (Ch.20).</p>
13	Psyche surrenders to Venus	<p>Psyche learns that Venus is angry with her and seeks protection at the temples of Ceres and Juno. Both goddesses express sympathy but decline to help her out of respect for their close relationships with Venus (Lib. VI, Ch.1-5; Graves 126-129). At last she surrenders to Venus, who has her beaten and orders her to perform difficult tasks (Lib. VI, Ch.8-21; Graves 127-140).</p>	<p>There are no precise parallels to Ceres and Juno, since Ungit is the only powerful goddess in Glome whose cult is discussed. The precise time or means when Ungit gets Psyche into her power is not explained, but Istra's captivity and tasks are mentioned in the "Sacred Story" (246; Ch.21). In Part II, after Orual learns to perceive herself as Ungit (276; Ch.2) and seeks strenuously to escape this condition, she comes to perceive herself as Ungit's "slave or prisoner" (286; Ch. 3), like Psyche.</p>
14	Dangers of the descent into the underworld	<p>Even after she has been instructed to find a passage where a living mortal can enter the underworld, any mistake Psyche makes could prevent her</p>	<p>The underworld is vague and shadowy. No specific depictions of Charon or Cerberus appear. Istra-Psyche meets distractions sent by</p>

		<p>return. She must bring two pieces of bread for Cerberus and two coins for Charon, ferryman over the river Styx. Several people—a man with a lame donkey, a corpse in the river Styx, and weavers on the shore--will ask her help, but she must pay no attention to any of them, for fear that she might drop one of the pieces of bread she is carrying for Cerberus. Venus has arranged these distractions for that purpose. She must sit at Proserpine's feet, accepting nothing better than "common bread" (Graves 139) and tell her errand. She must not look into the cask of beauty (Lib VI, Ch.20-21).</p>	<p>Ungit, but they are in the forms of the people from her past, first the populace of Glome which wanted her for a goddess, then a phantom of the Fox who wanted her to disbelieve in the reality of the gods and the underworld, and finally a phantom of Orual reproaching her for abandoning her and not loving her enough. She ignores them, understanding that their purpose is to impede her progress (302-304; Part II, Ch.4).</p>
14	Beauty in a casket	<p>Venus commands Psyche to bear a message to Proserpine, goddess of the underworld, asking for one day's worth of beauty, because she has lost so much of her own share while tending her son (Lib VI, Ch.16-19; Graves 136-139). Though warned by the tower not to open the casket herself (Lib VI, Ch.20-21; Graves 139-140), Psyche does so, telling herself that she needs some beauty to please Cupid. Apuleius explicitly denies that the cask actually brought Psyche any beauty, only sleep (<i>nec formonsitas ulla, sed infernus somnus ac vere Stygius</i> [Lib. VI, Ch.21]), but given his usual mode, who would not suspect a hidden meaning? Erich Neumann suggests, intriguingly, that "the beauty ointment [...] represents Persephone's eternal youth, the eternal youth of death" (118). And further, he</p>	<p>From Istra-Psyche's point of view, the reason for the task of seeking beauty is never described. But Orual, in Part II, comes to understand that she herself has Ungit's nature (276; Ch.2) and that she needs "beauty of soul" (282; Ch.3) to be reconciled to her sister and the god of the mountain. In Lewis's terms, this represents her understanding of "original sin" and her inability to perfect herself morally by her own efforts. Psyche brings her this gift, and in doing so, fulfills her task. The whole sequence is a form of what Lewis in <i>Mere Christianity</i> calls "good dreams," or, as he put it, "those queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and by his death, has somehow given new life to men" (44; Bk.2, Ch.3).</p>

		refers to what comes upon Psyche as a "regress[ion]" to a "narcissistic" state of existence. Venus (Aphrodite), in Neumann's view, represents a second stage, in which love exists for "the fertility of nature" (120), but Psyche ultimately achieves yet a third state, involving an intimate, personal love for her husband "and no one else" (123).	Roger Lancelyn Green notes Lewis's idea of the "good dream" in relationship to this novel (263).
15	Psyche's failure	Psyche follows all the necessary instructions except the last one, a warning against opening the casket of beauty; she does open it and a deep sleep comes upon her. Cupid comes to Psyche's rescue, restores the "beauty" to the casket and sends Psyche with it to Venus (Lib. VI, Ch.21; Graves 140).	Istra-Psyche does not fail; she is intended to give the casket to her sister, who is both Ungit and Psyche (304-306; Part II, Ch.4).

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